replied Grey, he could merely state his personal opinion that, if France were attacked by' Germany jn consequence of a question arising out of the agreement of 1904, public opinion would be strongly moved in her favour. This was too vague to satisfy Cambon, who remarked that he would repeat his question after the election. Meanwhile he thought it advisable that the informal discussions which had already begun should continue between the Admiralty and the War Office and the French Naval and Military Attaches, without committing the Governments to action in any way. Grey did not dissent, and, after consulting some of his colleagues, he authorized non-committal communications with French and Belgian experts—in the latter case in order to facilitate the discharge of our duty as a guarantor of Belgian neutrality in case of need.

" We were a little surprised/' confesses Huguet, the French Military Attach^, " by the readiness with which the authorization was granted. Campbell-Bannerman, Grey and Haldane were too clever not to realize that the studies now to be pursued would—whatever the qualifications—constitute a moral engagement." He was right, for the Prime Minister used much the same language. " I do not like the stress laid upon joint preparations," he wrote. "-It comes very close to an honourable understanding, and it will be known on both sides of the Rhine." Despite this inherent difficulty it was virtually impossible for a British statesman to decline the discussions requested by France. How else could effective aid be given if Germany struck a sudden blow ? France was still unready for the fray, and Russia, staggering under the blows of Japan, was temporarily out of action.

When Cambon repeated his question on January 31, Grey replied that no unconditional promise could be

given and it would be difficult to formulate conditions. Any change would transform the Entente into a defensive alliance, the necessity for which had not yet arisen, Our attitude in the event of a German attack would largely depend on how it occurred. His personal belief was that, if an attack arose from the Morocco agreement, public opinion would compel the Government to intervene. He had informed the German Ambassador of his view, as Lansdowne had done after the fall of Delcass6.
c-ambon had expected nothing more, and he was consoled by the hope that the military conversations now officially au-thorized might ultimately expand a regional agreement into a full working partnership. Promises were declined but expec-